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ABSTRACT

An analysis was done of methods for dealing with cultural insensitivity found on predominantly white university campuses and of strategies for remedying the dissatisfaction of students from minority groups with their college experience. The analysis used Arthur Chickering's vectors of development theory and Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement. Chickering's theory of vectors implies that college students deal with seven different developmental tasks which include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose and developing integrity. Astin's theory is based on five postulates, two of which were found to be relevant to the study issues. They propose: (1) that the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program; and (2) that the effectiveness of any education practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase student involvement. These theories were examined in relation to specific examples of programs for black college students being used by universities across the United States. The paper concludes that it is the responsibility of all faculty, staff and students to recognize and address the cultural insensitivities that minority students experience and to respond to unmet needs. (JB)

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A Proposal for the Implementation of Programs for Culturally Diverse Students on a Predominantly White University Campus

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"A PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS ON A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS"

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The purpose of this study was to propose several methods of dealing with cultural insensitivity found on predominantly white university campuses. After a thorough review of the available literature, it was determined that culturally different students, specifically black students, are dissatisfied with their experience of college life. This dissatisfaction is evident in five factors identified in the literature which include an absence of black role models among faculty and staff members, a lack of academic and financial preparedness, a poor selection of campus activities related to black students' life experiences and evidence of racism within the university environment.

Ideas to remedy these five factors of student dissatisfaction were found in examining two student development theories, Arthur Chickering's theory of vectors of development theory and Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement. The basic tenets of Chickering's theory and Astin's theory have been widely used in many university student development programs geared toward increasing cultural sensitivity across the university campus.

Therefore, this proposal was concerned with increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity among all cultural groups of students on college and university campuses so that they could fully benefit from those experiences available on a university campus.

Statement of the Problem

Since American higher education's beginning in 1636 at Harvard University, the types of students seen in American colleges and universities have undergone many dramatic changes. From yesterday's enrollment of only elite, white males to today's enrollment of people from various socio-economic, ethnic and gender groups, American higher education has grown from a very limited enrollment to an enrollment that is extremely diverse in cultural backgrounds. This new, culturally diverse group of students has challenged American higher education with language barriers, ethnic misunderstandings, cultural ignorance and social stereotyping. All of these factors have caused many institutions of higher education to re-evaluate and re-shape the services, instructional methods and developmental activities offered to students. However, whether completely restructuring the above-mentioned curricular and extra-curricular activities to serve the needs of today's culturally diverse student population or only slightly modifying them, student affairs divisions across the United States, as well as other various divisions of universities, have much work to do in order to improve cultural diversity and cultural awareness among everyone involved with students including administrators, faculty, staff and the surrounding university community (Barna, 1978, pg. 107).

Within Student Affairs, research has been conducted on the many different areas of cultural diversity. Multi-cultural counseling, racial identity attitude development, international

student stress and alienation of physically challenged students are only a few examples of the research available on cultural diversity. One particular group of students within this diverse population, black students, has been studied in detail by student affairs personnel across the country. According to the literature and research reviewed for this paper, the general consensus is that many black students are dissatisfied with their experience of college life.

For example, in an article concerning responses to the needs of diverse students, Jacoby (1991, pg. 290) identifies five very specific unmet needs many black students have. These unmet needs are directly related to some of the dissatisfaction felt by black students. They include, first of all, not being "appreciated or acknowledged by faculty, staff and students" for their different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Next, many black students are unprepared to face the academic and financial demands of college. Many black students attended "understaffed, underfunded and ill-equipped public schools." This lack of proper pre-college education adversely affects these students' abilities to perform at an acceptable level of academic achievement when entering college. Also, too often these black students' have come from homes of very low financial income with single-parent families. This lack of sufficient finances can cause stress for students that must pay for either most or all of their college education. Another need is poor selection of campus activities for blacks students that "relate

to their life experiences." These students would enjoy being involved in campus activities, but do not find any offered activities to be suitable for them. Evidence of racism on college campuses is another factor that causes students to be dissatisfied with college life. It creates a college environment that black students find "confusing and hostile." The last need identified by Jacoby (1991, pg. 290), is the "absence of black role models among faculty and staff." This creates feelings of alienation which causes black students to bond even more closely with fellow black students because of the loneliness created by lack of black role models. All of these unmet needs are causing great dissatisfaction among black students because of the cultural insensitivity they foster. It is imperative that programming concerning a lack of cultural diversity, especially with the black student population, be implemented on predominantly white university campuses in order to increase cultural awareness.

Explanation of Theories

Before tackling the problem of cultural awareness on a predominantly white university campus, it is helpful to examine two theories that will provide insight on what type of action universities should take in order to improve cultural diversity among students. The two theories used in this paper were designed specifically for dealing with college student development. The basic tenets of each theory lend themselves to ideas for implementing activities, programs and services

on college campuses to help in the remediation of cultural insensitivity.

Arthur Chickering's vectors of development theory (Knelfelkamp, 1978, pg. 23) and Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement (Astin, 1985, pg. 16) are both useful and well-noted theories to examine when looking at development of college students. Although these theories will not completely solve the cultural insensitivities of black students found on predominantly white university campuses, they will foster ideas, insight and creative thinking that will result in positive programs, services and activities for these black students.

The first theory, Arthur Chickering's theory of vectors of student development (1978, pg. 23), implies that college students between the ages of 17 and 25 deal with seven different vectors or developmental tasks during their college careers. These vectors or developmental tasks include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose and developing integrity. Although most students deal with these developmental tasks at some point while in college, there is no hierarchical order in which students attempt or complete these developmental tasks. For example, one eighteen year-old freshman may be attempting to establish an identity and become more autonomous while another eighteen-year old freshman has already mastered these two developmental tasks and is attempting to manage his or her emotions responsibly. For the purpose

of examining cultural insensitivity of black students, two of the seven vectors of Chickering's theory (1978, pg. 22) will be utilized.

Vector one, developing competence, states that if students can develop intellectual, physical and social competence, a basic sense of total self-competence will emerge within the individual (Knefelkamp, 1978, pg. 20). As mentioned by Jacoby (1991, pg. 20), many black students have a need to become more intellectually competent when they enter college because the poor quality of high school education they have received leaves them unprepared to face the academic demands of college. In this case, vector one of Chickering's theory seems to directly relate to this unmet need identified by Jacoby. Vector one also relates to another unmet need Jacoby identifies which is a lack of suitable social activities related to black students' life experiences. This lack of suitable activities can definitely hinder these black students from completing the task of developing social competence.

Vector five of Chickering's theory (Knefelkamp, 1978, pg. 20), freeing interpersonal relationships, postulates that proper development of this vector or task will increase students' acceptance and tolerance of differences between individuals which in turn leads to better abilities to foster mature, facilitative relationships among people of different cultural backgrounds. Jacoby identified an unmet need of black students to be "appreciated and acknowledged for their different cultural

and socio-economic backgrounds." This particular vector and unmet need are directly related. Chickering's theory is definitely applicable in this case.

The second theory to be examined for this paper is Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement (Astin, 1985, pg. 17). There are five basic postulates Astin describes in his theory. Although all of the postulates hold valuable educational information, postulates four and five are specifically applicable to cultural insensitivity of black students on a predominantly white campus. Postulate four states "the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program (Astin, 1985, pg. 19)." This postulate is in correlation with the need for black students to view the predominantly white university atmosphere as free of racism, welcoming and culturally aware. However, because black students currently view the university atmosphere as "hostile and confusing," there is limited learning and personal development available for black students because they are hesitant to become involved. Postulate five states "the effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase student involvement (Astin, 1985, pg. 21)." This statement is in accordance with the need for black students to have role models within university faculty and staff members. Universities should keep in mind the educational value of encouraging black faculty

and staff to become involved in more modeling for black students through such activities as advising student groups that are mostly black.

Application of Theories

Now that the unmet needs of black students on a predominantly white university campus have been examined in relation to the tenets of two student development theories, specific examples of programs for black college students being used by universities across the United States will be discussed. These programs are excellent models for predominantly white universities to look at when designing activities, services or programs for cultural minorities, particularly black students. The programs that are discussed address some of the five needs of black students Jacoby (1991, pg. 290) identifies in relation to the tenets of Chickering's and Astin's student development theories

Chickering's theory (Knefelkamp, 1978) supports the idea that if students can accomplish intellectual, physical and social competence, they will develop a basic sense of total self-competence. In order to develop basic competence, Shom (1991, pg. 18) suggests intervention in the pre-collegiate years by a cooperative effort between student affairs personnel and secondary educators in the high schools and junior high schools. For example, Shom (1991, pg. 17) describes the University of California's Early Outreach program that emphasizes developing minority high school and junior high school students' competence in writing, study skills and interpersonal skills through

interaction with college students working as role models, program assistants and counselors to the younger students. By developing programs such as this, a reward that is two-fold results. First, the number of underprepared students entering college would be reduced. The second part of this two-fold result is black college students that participated in this program are involved in a campus activity that relates to their life experiences - helping younger black students that are from the same background as the black college students which is also in direct correlation to Astin's fourth postulate (Astin, 1985, pg. 19). Another pre-collegiate intervention program relating to Astin's fourth postulate (1985, pg. 17) and Chickering's first vector mentioned by Shom (1991, pg. 18) discusses the College-Bound Program at Boston College. The minority students chosen to participate in this program receive academic tutoring during the school year and attend an enrichment program during the summer. In addition, if the student has satisfactorily completed the academic tutoring and enrichment program, he or she is guaranteed tuition, room and board for four years upon high school graduation. Programs such as this would deter the number of black students that are unprepared to face the financial challenges of college life. Although all universities would not be able to afford tuition, room and board for a great number of students, some students would be helped by this program.

A second program intervention deals with Chickering's fifth vector of freeing interpersonal relations (Knefelkamp, 1978,

pg. 23) in accordance with the unmet need of black students to accept and tolerate differences among themselves and people of other cultural backgrounds and for people of other cultural backgrounds to accept and tolerate black students. A workshop was designed by Chambers and Lewis (1992, pg. 79) that deals with these types of needs and would be very helpful in accomplishing Chickering's fifth vector (Knefelkamp, 1978, pg. 7). The workshop was designed to actually simulate a situation in which cultural differences of one group of participants were not appreciated. Students were divided into two groups, one of which was purposely discriminated against by the leader of the workshop and the other of which was praised and adored by the workshop leader. The group of students that was discriminated against was able to experience how not being appreciated and accepted felt, while the other group was able to experience much acceptance and appreciation. Before the workshop was over, the participants were informed of the simulated discrimination and were able to discuss how it felt to be unaccepted and unappreciated. They also were lead in a discussion by the leader of the workshop as to how these feelings of discrimination and nonacceptance were formed and how this discrimination is very common among groups of culturally diverse people. A workshop such as this would be very beneficial to students, both black and non-black, so that they will be more aware of how these cultural insensitivities are developed.

The last program intervention used in this paper involves

Astin's theory of student involvement, particularly postulate five of Astin's theory (Astin, 1985, pg. 17), in accordance with the need for black students to have more black role models among faculty and staff members to increase and promote participation of black students in campus activities to deter feelings of isolation and loneliness. In Dell and Mitchell's article, (1992, pg. 42), they find that as students become more comfortable with their racial identity, they are more likely to participate in activities that involve both black students and white students. If more black role models were identified to set an example for black students, black students would become more involved in campus activities and would become involved with campus programs involving black and non-black students instead of only turning to other black students for socializing. Although no specific program ideas were found in searching the literature for this paper, simply identifying black role models on the college campus and in the surrounding community and then asking these role models to participate in a program that promotes black student involvement would be a solid start for this program intervention. Mentoring programs, adopt-a student programs or any program that would allow black students more contact with these identified role models could be the beginning of a whole new perspective on college life for some cultural minorities, particularly black students.

Conclusion

The problem of black students, as well as other cultural

minorities, having specific unmet needs seems to prevail on many predominantly white university campuses. It is the responsibility of all faculty, staff and students to recognize these cultural insensitivities of minority students and to respond to these unmet needs. Many of the programs mentioned in the paper are applicable to all cultural minorities that are dissatisfied with their experience of higher education. Black students, the targeted population of this paper, are not the only group of college students with unfulfilled needs not being met by higher education. By assessing the needs of students, examining different theories and programs available and setting goals, many issues in higher education such as this one could be dealt with more effectively.

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